

Writing as a Ministry for God's Glory

Chapter 8 **Writing Fiction**

by Kathy Collard Miller

Of making many books there is no end... — Ecclesiastes 12:12b

In this last chapter, we'll talk about writing fiction. Fiction can be a useful tool in the Master's hands to touch the hearts of people, draw them closer to God, and also communicate the good news of Jesus Christ. The second piece of writing I sold was a short story for a Sunday school take-home paper. It was fun to write fiction and see how some important principles could be communicated. Recently, I've worked on a novel, and look forward to seeing how God wants to use that.

You may or may not be interested in writing fiction, but the techniques used for writing this genre can also be useful in writing nonfiction. When I wrote my first book, *Help for Hurting Moms* (now entitled *No More Anger*), I used fictional techniques even though it was a non-fiction book. So I encourage you to read this last chapter whether or not you plan to write fiction.

There are five major elements of writing fiction, whether you want to write short stories or novels. They are the premise, perspective, personalities, plot and place. Let's talk first about the premise of your fictional piece.

Premise

What is it that you want to communicate through your short story or novel? What theme do you want to address? These are the questions you will need to answer to be effective in writing a fiction piece. As you do, you will want to read widely in the same genre you want to write in.

For instance, if you want to write a romance novel, then those are the kinds of novels you'll want to read extensively. If you want to write a short story for a woman's magazine, you'll need to subscribe to that magazine and read all the fiction pieces they include.

Of course, there are many premises to choose from like: good versus evil, dishonesty doesn't pay, God's love is never ending, love conquers all, and others. As you begin writing, determine what you want your reader to conclude when he or she finishes your piece of fiction.

Ideas for a premise surround you. It could be based on your own life experiences or something important you want to communicate. In an article in *The Christian Communicator*, Dorothy Boone Kidney shares several unique ways she uses to find ideas for her fictional projects. She looks in the telephone book and as she sees a name, asks herself, "What sort of woman might have that name?" For instance, she once found the name Selinda. In her mind that name conjured a sly, slippery type, charming but also scheming. As she thought about the meaning of that name, she imagined circumstances involving such a person.

Another bold place for ideas, she says, is the personal columns in magazines and newspapers. She clips out those advertisements for possible story sources. She clipped the following:

Will trade a two-week vacation in my Venice, Florida, apartment for a two-week vacation in your Washington, D.C. apartment.

Dorothy went on to ask herself, "What kind of adventure could spring from an apartment or house swap?"

Dorothy also finds valuable brain-starter ideas in conversations overheard in hotel lobbies. She says, "Pick up a snatch of conversation and work it into your lively lead, then let the dialogue carry the rising tide of the story."

Dorothy even finds Christmas cards provide ready-made settings for fiction. She writes, "The picture on a card catches my interest more often than the sentimental message inside. An old-fashioned Cape Cod house with a wreath on the door and smoke rising from the chimney became the home for the major characters in my novel, *Portrait of Debec* (Moody Press)."

She also suggests an art show or museum as other places yielding valuable ideas. She says, "Paintings are powerful imagination stimulators. Whenever I leave an art gallery, my head is brimming with ideas." Dorothy also suggests watching people, observing changing scenery, and striking up conversations with strangers,.

Dorothy has given us some excellent ideas. To give birth to new ideas, a good question to ask yourself is: "what if...?" You can use this seminal question by making two columns, one for listing characters like a secretary, young mom, paperboy, writer, college student, etc. The other column lists situations, challenges, or problems like: financial problems, holidays, relationship problems, death, murder, etc. Then begin to brainstorm ideas combining items from each column and using the "What if...?" Like, "What if a college student was hired for the summer to be a nanny and she couldn't get along with the mother?" Or "What if a paperboy is saving for Christmas presents but a bully steals his money?"

Don't be afraid to let your imagination flow. All of your ideas won't be useable, but you could come up with a very unique one that becomes the premise for your fictional short story, novella or novel.

I encourage you to write down now the premise of a fiction piece you're currently working on.

Secondly, write down one that you'd like to work on in the future.

Point of View

As you prepare the premise of your story and then write it out, you'll need to determine the "point of view." The point of view refers to whose eyes you are writing through. There are three basic methods: first person, third person, and the omniscient perspective. Although some writers change the point of view during the story, it's best to keep consistent with one throughout the story.

Let's look at each one separately.

First person is when we tell the story from within the mind of one character—whether it's the main character or another person. As a result, it is from the "I, me, my" perspective. First person is a simple way to write and has great strength. It does have the limitation of a restricted point of view, because the author cannot include information known by other characters.

For instance, that character cannot know what another person is thinking or what is happening at another location unless he or she is told that information. As a result, the story is told through a narrow window of knowledge, but that is not necessarily a disadvantage. The first person perspective is popular because it gives the reader an intimate sense of that character.

The third person perspective refers to all characters with "he, him, his" or by using a character's name. The story is seemingly told from an outside source. Unlike the first person perspective, the narrator can know everything and refer to it.

The omniscient point of view is when the story is told from inside the mind of all the different characters at different times. This perspective is more difficult to carry off well and should be avoided by most writers.

Author Ruth Vaughn, in her book, *Write to Discover Yourself*, suggests this for determining which perspective to use: "If it is basically one person's story, First Person is your strongest tool. If you are dealing with a saga that embraces a lot of life in dramatic incidents taking place hundreds of miles apart, Third Person, or Omniscience, is almost imperative." (page 214)

If you are unsure as to which point of view to use, write a chapter of your novel or short story from each of the three perspectives. See which one works best.

Personalities

For most fiction, the most important element is writing about the people in your story. The personalities of the characters you create will keep the reader reading. You need to create characters who are comprehensible, compelling, and congruent. Let's look at each of those three aspects.

First of all, they need to be comprehensible, in the sense of being believable. We don't want the reader to think, "I can't comprehend there's actually anyone like this." If your created personality isn't believable, the reader will be constantly jerked back into the reality of knowing they are reading fiction, rather than being swept up in the fictional world you've created.

In order for them to be comprehensible, they must be human. They can't be perfect. They must make mistakes and also learn from their mistakes. A good story exhibits the character changing in some way.

The second aspect of creating good characterization is the personalities need to be compelling. The reader must care about them, motivated to continue to read to see what happens to this person. The character must have qualities making the reader care, while yet making them believable, as I mentioned before. Therefore, they must be likable in spite of their faults. This is why the villain of fiction is rarely the main character because we're not supposed to like them. We want to read about a hero or heroine, even if they have faults and weaknesses.

Another aspect of making personalities compelling is to make their lives significant. If a character's problems are portrayed as too light or too easily overcome, the reader will have a "ho-hum" attitude and find it easy to put the book down and not pick it up again because there's no real drama.

Finally, as we study fictional personalities, the character must be congruent. By this I mean, responding in such a way that is in harmony with his or her temperament and former reactions. If the character doesn't respond consistently with who the author has portrayed him, the reader won't trust what they are reading. They'll feel like the story is contrived. They know the author didn't make the effort to create a story true to life.

As I said earlier, that doesn't mean the character can't change. And certainly, he or she will be varied in their responses. But overall, his or her responses and the changes occurring in his or her perspective of life, must also be appropriate within a person's personality and temperament.

In order for your character to be comprehensible, compelling and congruent, you must know their basic temperament and personality.

The Temperaments

In order to determine the personality of your character, it's helpful to be aware of the four main temperaments. By choosing a temperament for your character based on what you want to communicate through them, it will be easier to keep him or her congruent. Here are the basic four temperaments. After I describe them, we'll talk about how to use this knowledge.

The first personality we could choose from is the Expressive. This person's main goal in life is to have fun. They are the life of any party. Expressives love people, places and adventures. Their weaknesses include not liking details or being organized.

Here is a listing of the Expressive's basic characteristics:

- Friendly and talkative
- Good sense of humor
- Creative and charming
- Energetic and restless
- Thrives on compliments
- Exaggerates
- Undisciplined
- Easily distracted

Loves approval, attention, and applause

The second temperament we could choose from is the Driver. This person's main goal is to control, both themselves and others. They sincerely believe their opinion is the only right one and they are very assertive in expressing it. They can make fast decisions and believe that a hurting person should "just do it—get over it." These characteristics can be both positive and negative, but when used negatively, the Driver must learn compassion.

Here are the basic characteristics of the Driver:

- Dynamic leader
- Unemotional
- Domineering and independent
- Sees big picture
- Determined to succeed
- Likes opposition
- Quick thinker
- Lacks empathy
- Intolerant

The third possibility is the Analytical. This person's main goal is to make everything and everyone perfect. Although any temperament can have perfectionist tendencies, the Analytical is the natural perfectionist. Analyticals are detailed-oriented and very organized. Because they analyze everything in minute detail, they can have "analysis paralysis" and be slow at making decisions.

Here is a listing of the basic characteristics of the Analytical:

- Conscientious
- Perfectionistic
- Loves to think
- Appreciates culture and the arts
- Thorough and organized
- Loves details
- Good listener and loyal friend
- Compassionate
- Easily depressed
- Remembers hurts/easily resentful
- Has unrealistic expectations

Finally, we could choose the temperament of the Amiable. This person's main goal is to have peace, sometimes at any cost. They are laid back and seem to lack having strong opinions. Very little is truly motivating to them. They evaluate everything from a "how much energy will this take?" perspective. But their primary strength is their ability to mediate between disagreeing people or groups. They are the natural ambassadors of the world.

The Amiable's basic characteristics are:

- Easy-going and calm
- Quick wit
- Low awareness of own emotions
- Excellent mediator
- Capable
- Compassionate, listens patiently
- More a watcher than a doer
- Low energy level
- Worrier
- Lacks self motivation
- Easily judges others
- Loves to tease

No Ideal Temperament

Although no one, including our fictional personalities is purely one temperament. We may have a sprinkling of three out of the four, but every person tends to operate in their temperament's strengths and weaknesses most of the time, especially when they are under stress.

But no temperament is perfect. Every one of our fictional personalities must exhibit both good and bad in order to be comprehensible.

Once you understand the temperaments, it'll be easy to choose the personality you need, depending upon the premise you want to communicate through your short story, novella or novel. For instance, if your premise is people can change, you could have a Driver become more compassionate, an Analytical become less perfectionistic, an Expressive become more others-centered, or an Amiable become more assertive. The reader is eager to see how they change.

These changes can happen, not because their basic, internal personality has changed, but because they are becoming more "versatile." The concept of "versatility" means a person chooses to operate in the strengths of another temperament through the power of the Holy Spirit. This will not come across as incongruent because we will portray the changes taking place over a period of time. It can be incongruent if a character responds outside of their temperament without anything prompting him or her to change.

For instance, an Amiable won't naturally jump up to voluntarily give a speech before a group, but the story could include the challenge of an Amiable character having to learn to speak because of his job. Overcoming his fear would be one of the obstacles he resolves as a part of the plot.

Develop Their Background

Besides knowing your characters' temperaments, you'll need to know their background: their history, childhood, likes, dislikes, view of life, etc.

Most fiction authors create a whole history of all their main personalities in their story. Though they will actually use little of this information in the book, the knowledge will empower them to make the character real in their own minds. Unless it is real in their own minds, it will never be real in their reader's minds.

For instance, here is a basic list of information you should know about your character.

- Name:
- Nickname:

Make sure that the name and nickname fit the character and the time frame of your story. You might also consider asking your friends what a particular name means to them as names often communicate certain personalities or characteristics.

- Age:
- Birthday:
- Where they were born:
- Physical attributes such as
 - color of hair:
 - color of eyes:
- What they like about themselves:
- What they don't like about themselves:
- Level of self-esteem:
- View of self:
- Unique characteristics of their voice:
- Unique characteristics of their sentence structure:
- Unique words or phrases they use:

You'll need to know where your character was raised in order to determine their speech patterns. For instance, if your character was raised in the South, you'll need to know words and the dialect from that area. There may also be unique expressions that represent a particular geographical area. Check in your local library for books about dialect.

Returning to the list... we should determine:

Traumatic childhood experiences:

Happy childhood experiences:

Information about their parents including national heritage:

Names and ages of siblings:

Preferences for:

- car
- clothing
- home
- hair style
- hobbies
- friends
- recreation
- colors
- art
- reading

For many of those preferences, you may want to develop a reason from their childhood they have a particular preference.

Sketch the kind of education your character has experienced: did she attend preschool? Was she a good student or a poor student?

And then also create their

Job experiences:

Make your character unique by knowing her gestures, mannerisms, and unique habits. You'll want to look at the people around you with a new eye looking for things you want to incorporate into your fictional character.

Another area of information is how your character responds to others. Are there things people do always making him or her angry, sad, or frustrated? Such information may be crucial to how he or she responds to other characters in the book and for the formation of the plot.

Those categories I've listed are only the beginning of the information you should know about each main character. Some authors develop twenty pages of information about their main character. They know this character as well as they know themselves.

Author Ruth Vaughn writes, "Only through such thorough understanding of your personalities can you provide true motivation for their behavior and human relations in your story." (page 206, *Write to Discover Yourself*).

Another way to make your character come alive is to find a picture or photograph representing your image of him or her. It could be a picture from a magazine, a photograph of a friend, or a picture of a celebrity. Place that picture in front of you as you write.

If you are basing your character on a known person, it's all right to do that, but you must change enough of the information to disguise it.

I trust as you work on developing your fictional personalities, you'll develop a love for your heroes and a disdain for your villains. It's fun to create them, but as you can tell, it does take work.

Plot

The fourth element of fiction is plot. Plot is the story line, blueprint, and strategy for communicating the conflicts and problems making up your fictional story. Every story must have a strong plot in order to be effective and compelling. It's the conflict and problems the personalities face making your story powerful. Without conflict, your fictional piece will not motivate your reader to continue reading.

Prolific author and writing teacher Norm Rohrer says, "A story without a plot is simply an incident. The plot is the plan, design or blueprint for a story. The plot provides a super-structure for creating a

beautiful piece of art."

Most fictional authors write a three to five page general plot description so they know where they're going and what they intend to convey. Some authors say they do not know the ending until they get there, but for the beginning writer that's a dangerous way to start. The general plot description will become your working outline and give you confidence in writing your story. A good exercise for developing your knowledge of plot is to read a short story or novel and then write out your own plot synopsis of that story.

There should be four general components of your outline:

Introduction. The beginning of your story must immediately introduce the main characters and some point of conflict. Immediately show the personalities confronted by the basic problem the main character will face throughout the book.

Body of the story or novel. This is made up of a succession of obstacles and resolutions, only to have a new set of problems face the main character. Each chapter must end on a note of suspense so the reader will be motivated to continue reading onto the next chapter. But within each chapter the hero or heroine must have minor victories and then face new obstacles.

Author Margaret J. Anderson writes, "Whatever problem your lead character faces, be sure it is vitally significant and it grows increasingly urgent, perhaps also more complicated as your story unfolds."

Climax. In the body of the story, the resolution of each obstacle does not solve the main problem of the story, but instead builds to the third element of the plot. The climax is the point of highest dramatic intensity. It is the major turning point of the story bringing the final complete resolution of the big problem. The climax must come at the point where there seems to be no hope for the hero or heroine. It is his or her darkest moment when there doesn't seem to be any way out of the horrible situation they face.

Resolution. Then in a short burst of writing, we have the fourth and final component of the plot: the resolution and satisfying conclusion to the story. At this point, any unaddressed barriers or obstacles previously put in the way of the hero must be addressed and resolved. As I'll mention later, the resolution must be satisfying by having reasons behind it.

As you develop your plot more specifically, your preliminary plans should include a synopsis for each chapter. Author Elaine Schulte recommends it should include the following information:

Opening scene:

Middle scene or scenes:

Final scene:

This chapter accomplishes:

It says this one thing:

Strings left dangling:

It furthers the plot by:

Character development:

It deals with this one facet of the problem:

It resolves or complicates this facet of the problem:

It brings up this new problem as a result:

Why is this chapter necessary to the novel?

Knowing all that information about every chapter will make writing your novel easier.

ABC's of Plot

Knowledge of the ABC's of plot will also make your writing go more smoothly. The ABC's of plot are: action, background, and conversation.

Action

Let's look first at the "A" of plot: action. The action takes place as a central problem is faced and along the way, smaller obstacles block the path of the character who is trying to solve the central problem. The character should have one dominant desire. The main character and the problem must be equally strong for conflict to result. There are four basic scenarios to bring about the action of plot:

1. a person in conflict with another person

2. a person in conflict with self
3. a person in conflict with circumstances
4. a person in conflict with nature

If you are writing a short story of 5,000 words or less, there should only be one of those scenarios addressed. In a longer short story or novella, you can include more of those elements. In a novel, it's effective to use as many as possible—as long as it's natural and not forced. Here are some possible complications:

- misunderstandings
- believing gossip
- spiritual warfare
- personality difficulties
- past traumas (divorce, abuse, etc.)
- differences of opinion
- religious differences
- cultural differences
- wrong attitudes or assumptions about God
- opposite temperaments
- emotions, such as fear, loneliness, greed, lust, etc.

As you develop the action, remember it must be believable and strong enough to compel the reader to continue reading. It should not be contrived; in other words, things shouldn't happen without a reason or cause. Many beginning fiction writers make the mistake of having the supernatural hand of God miraculously solve the heroine's problems. That could easily seem unsatisfying, like a cop-out. As if the writer couldn't figure out an inventive solution so she just sent an angel to make everything better.

For instance, if your plot needs a piece of evidence destroyed, it may be convenient for you as the writer to have a fire start in a house for no apparent reason and burn up the evidence. But that would not be satisfying to the reader. Instead, you'll need to set up a cause of the fire. Maybe a minor character could stuff Christmas wrapping paper into a fireplace thinking that's the way to get rid of wrapping paper. But as the papers burn, flames shoot out and start a fire that quickly spreads to the nearby Christmas tree. As a result the house burns down and with it the piece of evidence.

The best action writing prepares for something to happen much earlier in the story before it's needed. For instance, in our example of the fire, earlier in the story that minor character could mention how his family always got rid of the problem of the wrapping paper by burning it in the fireplace. That way when he later stuffs the fireplace with wrapping paper, it will seem believable because there was a reason for him to do that.

Another unsatisfying point of action is when a character suddenly makes a major decision and nothing has prompted her to change her mind. Whenever something happens in the plot, especially when a personality makes a decision and *especially* for the conclusion of the story, there needs to be sufficient basis for him making that decision.

The "B" of the ABC's of plot is the background information. This explains the plot. There are two ways to communicate background. The first is *telling* it and the second is through *showing* it. In our previous chapters we talked a lot about telling and showing. Please also refer back there, especially for the examples given.

Telling information about the personalities, place, and plot of your story is an acceptable way to communicate but it is not the superior way. It should be used as sparsely as possible. As the word explains, "telling" just means you come right out and say it. Do you want the reader to know your main character was an only child? You could write, "Cynthia was an only child." Unfortunately, such writing is passive and uncreative.

A slightly better way to tell your information is through a flashback. The flash back is when the author describes an earlier event through a character remembering and describing it. If Cynthia being an only child is important enough to use a flashback, you could have Cynthia visiting a friend who has only one child. As she observes how the child has a hard time sharing her toys, Cynthia could remember the

day in her childhood when a neighbor called her selfish because she was an only child who wouldn't share her toys. If her trying to be less selfish is one of the challenges in the story, so much the better. The flashback has become an important part of the plot.

At times flashbacks can be tricky because if it is not used correctly it can come across sounding contrived. To prevent that from happening, we must have a smooth transition into the flashback. A transition is something making the character think of the previous event. In our example of Cynthia, it's the fact she's observing another only child. If she had just remembered the incident of the neighbor without anything causing her to recall it, it would sound manipulated. There must be something jogging the character's memory.

Another way to give background, which is the superior method, is through *showing*. As we've learned in previous chapters, the "show, don't tell," technique is a valuable one for writers and it's just as valuable in writing fiction.

In order to communicate the plot and background information through showing, we should give information in a subtle way rather than just stating it outright. For instance, to show a character's devious nature, instead of writing, "He was a devious kind of person," you could have him telling a lie.

As you write, make every effort to "show" background information, rather than just telling it.

The "C" of plot is conversation. Conversation between our fictional personalities is also an excellent way to "show, rather than tell."

Conversation between characters is an effective and superior means of moving the plot along. Many short stories, novellas, and novels are written with dialogue taking up a major part of the writing. In some books it can be 90 percent of the writing. And in fact, in young adult novels, it should be 90 percent. The next time you read a short story or you flip through a novel, notice specifically how much of the book is written in dialogue form.

Any dialogue you write must serve a purpose. If it doesn't make the plot proceed or give essential information, it should be omitted.

Here are some guidelines for making your dialogue well-written.

Craft the verbal words to fit each character. You already know the character's background and temperament, therefore you can write according to the way he would speak. Each of your characters will be distinct and unique in the way they speak. They should have their own special phrases. For instance, if they are witty, they should be telling jokes or poking fun. If they are serious, they will speak more slowly and thoughtfully.

By having unique ways of speaking, your characters will be even more real for your readers.

Also combine mannerisms with the character's speech. Maybe your character who speaks slowly will scratch his head frequently. Or the character who is witty has a tendency to nod her head whenever she's telling a joke. Find something that goes along with their unique talking which will help the reader to visualize that character.

Obviously you must know your character to do all of this. Walk around looking at life through your main character's eyes. Ask yourself, "What would my character be thinking in this situation or saying about this? How would they respond?"

Remember your characters' verbal comments will be impacted by their background, education, self concept, and the period your story is written in. Obviously someone in the Civil War will speak differently than a person from Roman times.

Read the dialogue out loud. Ask yourself whether it sounds awkward or stilted. A significant way to make dialogue sound natural is to use contractions. Instead of writing, "I will not," you would write, "I won't." Instead of "I am going home," you'd write, "I'm going home."

Break up the conversation with short bits of description. Describe what else is going on, where the characters are, what they're doing, or what's happening around them.

Learn how to use "speech tags." Speech tags are the "he said" and "she replied" telling the reader who is speaking. Once you have established in a conversation who is speaking, you don't need to use a speech tag every time the conversation changes to a different person. But every once in a while you can include one of the speech tags to make sure the reader hasn't lost track. We may also use too many

synonyms for the word “said.”

The next time you read fiction, notice the way speech tags are handled.

Communicate the emotions through the actual words being said and in descriptions of body language. Don’t use a lot of adverbs.

As an example, here is a portion of conversation written poorly.

Connie looked at Joe and cried out, "I can't believe you didn't tell me this before."

Joe replied, "Well, I would have if I didn't think you would overreact."

Connie shot back, "If you want to know why I always overreact, it's because you're always doing such crazy things."

"Crazy things, huh?" Joe laughed quizzically. "Anyone would do crazy things if they were married to you."

Connie gasped, her mouth opened in shock. "I've had enough of this. I'm getting out of here!" She walked to the door and slammed it behind her.

Before I give my own improved edit of that section, rewrite that section using the ideas you have already learned.

Here's how I would clean up that conversation to make it flow better.

Connie looked at Joe and cried out, "I can't believe you didn't tell me this before."

"Well, I would have if I didn't think you would overreact," Joe replied.

"If you want to know why I always overreact, it's because you're always doing such crazy things."

"Crazy things, huh?" Joe laughed. "Anyone would do crazy things if they were married to you."

"I've had enough of this. I'm getting out of here!" Connie walked to the door and slammed it behind her.

I’ve been able to improve it a bit, but I’m sure you did an even better job.

From that example of conversation, notice the correct way to write the punctuation marks for conversation. The quotation marks at the end of the sentence are on the outside of the period, question mark, or exclamation point.

Place

The final aspect of planning our short story, novella or novel is deciding on the place where the story will be situated. To be authentic, if it is placed in a real geographical area, you will need to research that area, ideally by traveling there. When you are there, be sure to take copious notes along with photographs to help your memory as you write later. Purchase professionally prepared maps but also draw a map of the area so that you can remember where things like buildings and other objects are located. There may also be tourist brochures available.

An important part of your research will be to check out the history of the area. As with knowing your characters, you’ll need to learn much more about the area than you’ll ever put into the actual manuscript. But you never know what important tidbits of information will later be useful to make the book more real in the mind of the reader.

If you’re creating the place from your own imagination, you may even need to be more diligent in preparing material about the location. You’ll need to plan where everything is located geographically. Again, draw a map you’ll place in front of you as you write. Readers will be disappointed if they identify inconsistencies in a book. We don't want them to find mistakes.

Just as your characters have a personality, so does a town, city or locale. Write as much as you can about your imaginary setting, determining its personality and the unique possibilities of the area. Are the people friendly or distant? Is the climate tropical or desert? What is its background and history?

In the past most books were written with long descriptions of the book’s setting. In today's writing, the descriptions are not long. It’s best to describe the setting in the context of the action. For instance, you may have a character who is feeling confused. They're trying to make a decision. You could have them look around and notice the countryside or notice the room they’re in. Something in the room or something about the countryside could become a catalyst for helping them to make their decision. This subtle way of describing the surroundings communicates best rather than a lengthy narration of the setting.

That wraps up the five major elements of fiction writing.

Marketing

You'll market your short stories, novellas and novels in the same way I described in our previous sessions for nonfiction works. *The Christian Writers Market Guide* lists the markets considering fiction. Many publishers are developing new lines of fiction books and many are expanding their lines. It's a good time to communicate scriptural ideas through fiction as many people buy novels and many magazines print fiction short stories.

I wish you the best in placing your fiction pieces. I know our almighty, powerful, sovereign God will glorify Himself through every project He desires to reach others. Continue to seek Him and be confident He is guiding you, step by step.

Our chapters about professional writing have concluded and I've been delighted to share with you. If God has called you to be a professional writer, He has given you a special and treasured talent He wants to be used in a giving and generous manner. I encourage you to:

Seek a servant's heart desiring God's glory along with benefits for others through your written words.

Strive to represent God's message in a clear, concise, and honest way that communicates truth to the best of your ability.

Stretch your abilities and skills continually. Have an attitude open to constructive criticism and helpful evaluation from others, whether in a critique group or from seeking editing from qualified writers and editors.

Select carefully those who will be valuable mentors and honest encouragers in your work. Writing can be a solitary profession, so understand you need others to fill the well of creativity.

See yourself as God's vessel, constantly evaluating your heart for dependence upon God's Spirit to write His message. Remember Satan would like to use the temptations of having your words in print to create an arrogant writer who needs to be the center of attention.

Set your heart on having a humble spirit not needing to be constantly stroked through a byline. Focus on ways you can build up others instead of drawing attention to yourself.

Here is my prayer for you.

Heavenly Father, thank you for this privilege of sharing the joy of writing. You've given us writers a wonderful challenge and blessing. Thank you for being willing to use our inadequate efforts and for the power of your Holy Spirit to make an impact in reader's hearts and minds. I pray for each reader of this information to be strengthened and equipped to fulfill the plan you have for her. Guide her in her writing and open the doors of publishing you have planned for her. We know you will complete your plan because you are a Mighty, Awesome God, whom we can trust. You deserve all the praise and glory for anything accomplished through us. We love you, Lord. Thank you for loving us first. In Jesus' holy name we pray, Amen.

Kathy Collard Miller is the author of over 50 books and can be reached through www.KathyCollardMiller.com. Her books are available on amazon.com. She is also a speaker who has spoken in over 30 US States and 8 foreign countries. As a lay counselor, she meets frequently with those looking for greater sanctification.

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